

Greenville County Public Library: Scenario Planning

Kristin “Krissa” Stewart

Marshall School of Business, USC

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Dr. Cindy Guyer

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Greenville County: The Town and the Library

Greenville County South Carolina is a county in the upstate of South Carolina. Right along the Blue Ridge Mountains, it is a county of 523,542 citizens. It is best known for the city of Greenville and the three colleges within its borders. The public library system within the county is known as the Greenville County Library System and includes twelve branches and a Bookmobile system. In 2020 alone, the Greenville Library System reported 1.13 million in person visits, 1.39 million website visits, and 2.77 million items borrowed. This is a community that is focused on housing, economics, public engagement, and improving mobility.

Careers and Economy

Greenville is a county that is very concerned with maintaining its economy. Cost of living is lower than the national average, with the estimated monthly costs for a single person to be around \$972 without including rent (Numbeo, 2021). Greenville is also a county with low unemployment rates. With a total labor force of around 250,548 people, only 7,215 are currently unemployed. This places unemployment rates at 3.2% (Economic Research, 2021). The median household income in Greenville comes to \$54,819 per year. Yet, interestingly, only 34.2% of the workforce has a bachelor's degree or higher (Greenville Area Development Corporation, 2018).

By industry, the vast majority of the workforce, 48.2%, is employed in the service industry with the second most common positions, 16.7%, being in manufacturing (Greenville Area Development Corporation, 2018). In fact, culturally the jobs in manufacturing are often considered sought after. General Electric Company employ 3,400 Greenville residents and Michelin North America, Inc. employs 1,650. Outside of manufacturing the top employers are

the Greenville Health System, who employs 15,493 residents, and the Greenville County School System, who employs 11,000 residents (Greenville Area Development Corporation, 2018).

Greenville is an interesting place when it comes to politics. Most people within Greenville consider themselves to be more liberal than conservative compared to their neighbors (Pilny, 2017). The people of Greenville seem to vote in favor of what will keep the manufacturing businesses in their town instead of moving somewhere else. Those pro-business policies seem to be more likely to appear with Republican candidates. Perhaps this is why 58.1% of Greenville residents voted Republican in the 2020 elections (Best Places, 2020).

Demographics

With a population of 523,542 Greenville is a relatively populous county. 48.5% of the residents are male and 51.5% are female. The largest age demographic is between the ages of 25 to 54, coming out to a total of 39.7% of the population. 22.9% of the population is under the age of 18 and the remaining 77.1% are 18 years and over (United States Census Bureau, 2019). The median age with Greenville County comes out to 38.2 years (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

Looking at race, 333,084 residents report to being white, followed by 81,497 who report being Black (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Going further, members of the populations also report to being Indigenous, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and of “Other Races”. 8,470 people also report being of two or more races, the most common being White and Black at 2,932 residents (United States Census Bureau, 2019).

The local school system is the Greenville County School District. It includes 52 Elementary Schools, 25 Middle Schools, 19 High Schools, 4 Career Centers, and 4 Special Focus

Schools (Greenville County Schools, 2021). There are currently 73,291 students, ranging from Pre-K to 12th Grade, enrolled in the Greenville County School District (Greenville County Schools, 2021). According to the 2021 Progress Report, this is the 45th largest school district in the United States (Greenville County Schools, 2021). The progress report also states that there is an 86.1% graduation rate, 4,427 students took Advanced Placement (AP) tests, and 858 students earned one or more industry certifications (Greenville County Schools, 2021).

Greenville is also a community that has little to no public transit and is not very walkable. 89.9% of the labor force drives to work, either alone or by carpool. 0.4% use public transit, 1.8% walk, 0.2% ride a bicycle, 1.7% take a taxi, and the remaining 6% work from home (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Just driving around Greenville, you can see it is not a walkable city, with inconsistent sidewalks and a spread-out landscape. You also will rarely see a bus stop, the only form of public transit available. Those bus stops are not even always proper stops, sometimes merely a sign to stand beside. Looking at the bus routes online, one can see that there are 17 routes and they do not connect easily outside of the city center. In fact, many routes do not even run on Sundays or in the early morning (Greenlink, 2021). This is evidence that the people of Greenville are spending a significant portion of their income on transportation.

Strategic Plans

This is actually a social issue that the city council hopes to address and improve upon the problem in the coming years. One of their top priorities is in increasing mobility in the town through expanding the bus system and enhancing sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails (Greenville, 2021). Other priorities of local government includes affordable housing, addressing infrastructure needs, strengthening the economy, working towards green energy while protecting

the local environment and natural resources, and promoting public engagement (Greenville, 2021).

The strategic plan for the Greenville County Library System is all formed around the goal of promoting literacy, foster community collection, and inspire learning. Their goals include helping community members to find success in pursuit of their personal interests and goals, to provide equitable and convenient access to services and resources, to become one of the community's favorite destinations, and to improve digital literacy (Allen, 2014). In short, they wish to provide information and adjacent services for the community. This is a goal that seems well within reach with 1.13 million in person visits, 1.39 million website visits, and 2.77 million items borrowed. The library also has an annual budget of \$20 million, funded mostly from local property taxes (Jeter et al., 2021). The library does also work with the charity organizations to raise funds to add to the budget or for special programs and events. With a total staff of only 210 people (Zippia, 2021), not including volunteers, \$20 million annually feels like a good budget with room to create programs to meet their goals. Within their twelve branches the Greenville County Library provides classes, clubs, finance lessons, meeting spaces, and children's activities (Greenville County Library System, 2021). Many of these events are run by library staff or volunteers and are a great way to involve the community and make the library a great place to be.

On the other hand, the Downtown Greenville Strategic Plan is focused on economic and physical success (Biggins et al., 2019). There is not much room for the library to fit in there. Anything the library could do to aid in economic success would be on the long term, such as providing reading aid or tutoring to help more people gain education. More than anything, it feels as though the library is a completely separate entity than two parts of a larger whole. The

two may only come together when their interests align, which does not seem to be on the table for now.

Stakeholders

The first and possibly most important group of stakeholders to consider when looking at the Greenville County Public Library is the library patrons. These are the people who frequent the library for any number of reasons. Some come for books, some for internet, some for clubs, and some for all of the above and more.

The next group of stakeholders to consider is that 210 members of library staff currently employed in the various branches. These people not only likely believe in the mission of the Greenville County Library, but they also rely on the library for their livelihood. If the library doesn't do well, they could lose everything. A group in a similar, but less serious situation are the volunteers. For them, the success of the library is a time and emotional loss, not a monetary one.

Looking into the Future

Greenville is a community that is growing quickly with its focus on business ventures. It is a fast-growing community yet still feels spread out and empty in places. Three cities within Greenville County are ranked within the state's top 20 fastest growing cities (Cavallaro, 2020). Speaking to locals, they consider the county itself a larger community rather than looking at the smaller cities within the county. There are worries that Greenville will merge with Atlanta, Georgia, and Charlotte, North Carolina, to become a megalopolis (Fears, 2014). This rapid growth is just one factor that is likely to affect Greenville and its library system in the coming years. Other growing trends and long-term effects are harder to predict from the get-go. One of

the significant changes coming is a direct result of the current pandemic. Another trend that Greenville County libraries will need to catch up with is Maker Spaces and other emerging technologies to be an interesting place to be.

The growth of a megalopolis is something that is both exciting and intimidating at the same time. A megalopolis is essentially a giant city that spreads itself out over an entire region (Fears, 2014). The regional megalopolis that Greenville is predicted to one day be a part of is called the Piedmont eco-region. As cities grow, local services often find themselves stretched, if not overwhelmed. Already, the Greer Branch of the Greenville Library system had to close in 2019 for significant updating and remodeling to expand to better serve a larger community (Greenville County Library System, 2019). As the community grows, the library must grow to meet it, but that is something that is difficult to find the funds for. On the upside, a larger community allows the library to serve more people and find the money to provide more services that they may not have been able to before more people, and thus more tax dollars, are coming to the library.

Current Library Trends

The most challenging trend to plan for and predict is the results of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Greenville is currently in a red zone, with 512,440 confirmed cases and a rate of 13,143.93 per 100k residents (SCDEHC, 2021). Yet, the county shows no signs of going into another lockdown. In fact, the State has banned local mask mandates (Markowitz, 2021). Cases are likely to continue to rise, with only a 43% vaccination rate (Navarro, 2021). Now, the pandemic has allowed libraries to be creative with new forms of media and services, but it is nearly impossible to predict how this will affect libraries long term. Will libraries implement

plans for future pandemics? Or will they just hope for the best and potentially slip into the same scrambling situations again?

The final trend that is likely to affect Greenville County significantly in the future is the prevalence of Makerspaces and other new forms of technology, which continues to grow rapidly. All of the Greenville County libraries offer computers and Wi-Fi, but only two provide more contemporary services, like a teen room. None include any Makers Spaces, tech rooms, or 3D printers (Greenville County Library System, 2021). For a city the size of Greenville, this is unusual, especially with the rate of local growth. These are popular library offerings because they are appealing to teenagers and young adults. They provide experiences that often cannot be found anywhere else. Yet, if they don't the library may find itself struggling or considered out of date.

Strategic Plans and the Future

First, when looking at strategic plans set up for the library, we must remember that not everything can be predicted before it happens. To get the elephant out in the open first, we must admit that there was no way a major pandemic such as COVID-19 could have been predicted. With this in mind, we must remember that everyone, including libraries, were forced to scramble to continue services. With this experience, the Greenville County Library system can plan better ways to help the community. More online opportunities may be suitable. Already, one library has a drive-through window to pick up books (Greenville County Library System, 2021). Perhaps this is something that can be planned to add to more libraries in the future. Both in case there is another world-altering event and provide such things for convenience and to provide services to those who may be homebound.

There are also no plans within the strategic plan for Makerspaces or tech centers. This is not necessarily something required, but it can make your library stand out compared to other opportunities in a community. It can also provide experiences someone in the community may never get otherwise. Oftentimes, new technology is too expensive for the average person to buy. One thing they could do is dedicate one library to have a Makerspace as a trial run. It could be a simple one, to begin with, but should include some technology that isn't available in the rest of the library. Perhaps 3D printing pens would be a good place to start if a proper 3D printer isn't feasible.

The growth of the community is something that will affect the Greenville County Library System. Already, they are making strides to combat this by expanding the Greer Library branch. While there is nothing in the strategic plan about doing more, that is likely more about spreading out the significant monetary changes rather than a lack of planning. These are released by the year, and most of the time, a community cannot afford to remodel a different library branch every year. Still, that community may be able to every five years, for example, so further remodels are likely already in the mind of the Greenville County Library.

Private Makerspaces vs the Library

As technology improves and evolves a library has a certain obligation to keep up with the improving technology. The Greenville County Library has fallen behind in that area. Where other libraries across the country have set up Makerspaces with new technology or crafting areas, Greenville has barely set up two Teen Rooms (Greenville County Library System, 2021). This program was chosen because while the Greenville County Library system provides some technological services, it may not be able to meet the needs of the quickly growing community,

who will have different and varied interests. This lagging behind technologically will eventually hurt the library in the long run, because people will have fewer reasons to come to the library, rather than adding on reasons.

As the interest in new technology increases, it is possible that other organizations and businesses will try to fill the void that the library has accidentally left open. This is a situation that can be prevented by working proactively rather than in a reactionary fashion. Many organizations react to problems rather than planning for them and are thus scrambling to make everything work the way it should.

Within the next couple years, The Greenville County Library should set aside a portion of its budget to make a Makerspace area in one of their branches. The best option would likely be the Hughes Main Library downtown. It has several empty meeting rooms and would be simple to turn one of the smaller ones into a small Makerspace to gauge interest and as a bit of a test run. It could include Laptops or Computers with software that is not typically on library computers, such as Photoshop and coding programs, materials for more hands-on crafts, and if the budget allows, even a small 3-D printer.

While still in its infancy, librarians could monitor the area on a rotating schedule. Mostly, they would be there to ensure everything runs smoothly, and nothing is broken or damaged, seeing as this would be a new program the librarians would have to learn about as they go. For example, most librarians will not have experience with 3D printing and would be learning alongside the patrons.

While this is not a requirement for any library, it does give systems a leg up and has proven to be very popular in libraries across the country (Cruz, 2016). It gives patrons a new and exciting

reason to come to the library, especially if advertised correctly, so the community knows about the new program and its offerings.

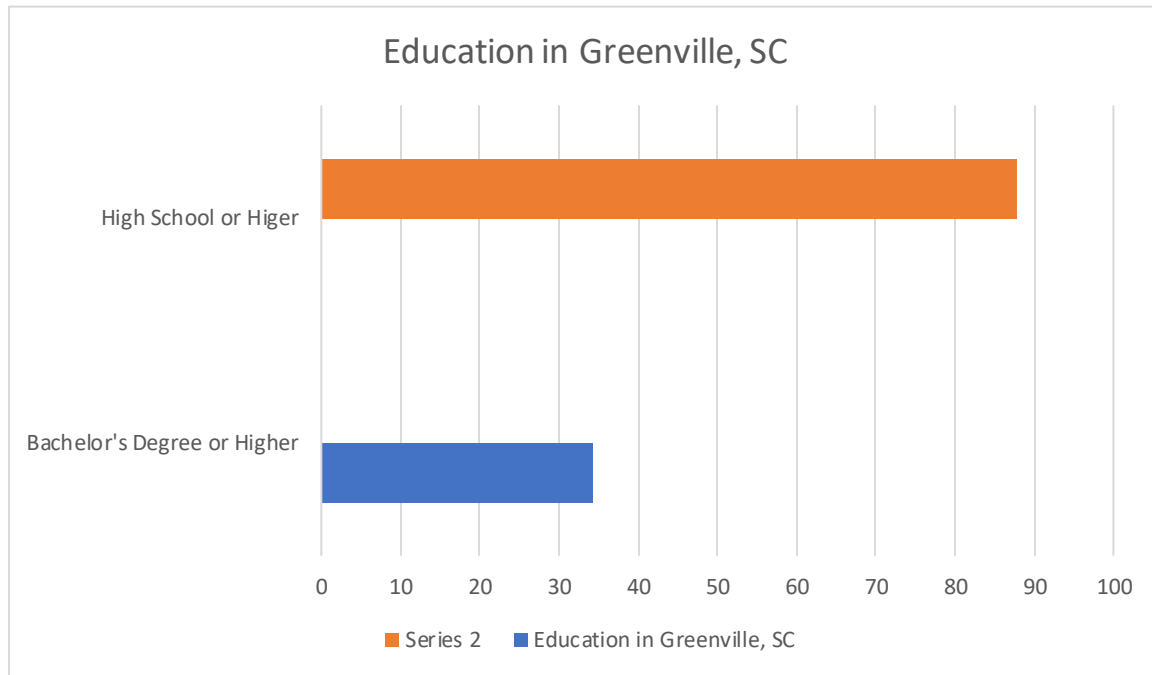
Appendix

Table 1:

Means of Transportation to Work	
Car, truck, or van	89.9
Drove alone	79.8
Carpooled	10.1
In 2-person carpool	7.3
In 3-person carpool	1.9
In 4-or-more person carpool	0.9
Workers per car, truck, or van	1.07
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0.4
Walked	1.8
Bicycle	0.2
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1.7
Worked from home	6.0

Table 2:

Employment by Industry		
Industry	Percent	Number of Employees
Agriculture/Mining	0.5%	1,223
Construction	6.5%	15,883
Manufacturing	16.7%	40,806
Wholesale Trade	3.4%	8,308
Retail Trade	11.1%	27,123
Transportation/Utilities	4.3%	10,507
Information	1.5%	3,665
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	5.5%	13,439
Services	48.2%	117,775
Public Administration	2.4%	5,864
Total	100%	244,347

Chart 1:

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